

Meet some of the Bible Translation Family



East Papua Area team

POM National Office including the Central, Gulf-Western, NGL and Bougainville teams



Northern Area team

Flag raising Ceremony

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IN OUR WORDS

The official newsletter of PNG BTA

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BTA Convenes for 10th Biennial Conference

More than sixty members from the PNG Bible Translation Association (BTA) and visitors gathered in Ukarumpa, Eastern Highlands Province for the 10th bi-annual National Conference. It was held

own God's Word so that Papua New Guinea can be transformed. BTA staff, field workers and Board members were challenged to change and become more like God in order to impact people around them.



Conference participants joining hands for prayer during the evening fellowship

Many of the participants expressed their desire to hear from God and receive instruction on what He wanted them to achieve. For some first timers, it was a special time to meet the BTA family and learn from one another how they can better do their work as well as reconciling over past issues.

from June 8-14th and is the highest directional setting of the BTA organizational structure. The theme of the Conference was 'Owning God's Word, Transforming PNG'.

Among those present at the conference were the National Coordinator for the Solomon Islands Bible Translation and Literacy Partnership, Joshua Lui and

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PNG BTA Director David Gela in the opening of the conference called on members to adopt the theme of the conference and make it their business to

Conference theme:

**“Owning God's Word,
Transforming PNG”**

From the Director's Desk



We are glad to be able to produce this issue of *In Our Words*. The last issue was in June 2007. The reason for this long silence is due to lack of staff to put the newsletter together for us. I'm thankful that Ana Opungu has offered to help us produce this issue. We trust we would be able to maintain a regular production of this from now on to keep you informed of some of the exciting things happening in the Bible translation movement in Papua

New Guinea.

In this issue we focus on the 2009 National Conference, held at the main SIL Centre, Ukarumpa, from 8th to 14th June. For the first time, all the logistical tasks for the conference is handled by Papua New Guineans serving with SIL at its Ukarumpa operational centre. We are very thankful for this partnership. They represent the Church in PNG. They also represent many Papua New Guineans who are interested and committed to seeing the Word of God bringing transformation to PNG.

Our conference theme this year is "Owning God's Word, Transforming PNG." This theme is helping us, who are Gentiles, to "make" the God of Jacob OUR GOD. We recognize the power of God's Word to transform individuals, families, communities, the nation of PNG and the world. This conference will also help us to look to God for His direction for the future.

I trust you'll enjoy reading the articles and news contained in this issue. We appreciate your partnership through prayer, giving or being involved personally to make God's Word available to our people in PNG. We welcome your comments to improve this newsletter.

I close with the verse I quoted as I began our spiritual retreat at this conference. It's our prayer for you. "May the LORD answer you when you are in distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you." (Psalm 20:1)

Miniafia

work. In 1994 Ken and Vicky Ghent went to take up the Wakefields' place but after only a year they also left due to health concerns. Construction materials for a house they were planning to build became the Miniafia translation office.

A village checking committee was formed comprising especially older people living in the surrounding villages for the village checking. Later, a 5-member review committee was formed to

review the draft before it went to the village checkers. Consultant checking was done in Ukarumpa by SIL and later by BTA in the village.

In hindsight, Stanley says, "We are happy that David [left] so that our people can see the work as our work."

The final consultant check was finished on November 2008. Tears of joy fell as they celebrated.

The Finish Line?

Finally, from February to May this year Josiah and Stanley together with their

families went to Ukarumpa for the rigorous work of typesetting. David and Fran were there as technical advisers. They finished it on schedule and now it is on its way to Korea for the printing by the World Bible League.

"We are happy that David [left] so that our people can see the work as our work."

Josiah and Stanley are looking at dedicating the Miniafia New Testament end of this year or early next year.

Asked what they will do afterwards Josiah says he will go into literacy to help especially the young people to read the Bible in Miniafia. Stanley

says, "The time of hard work is finished, that doesn't mean we finish the race, we are still running to the finish line, we are only resting our minds then start the OLD TESTAMENT, God willing."



Typesetting team members celebrate completion of typesetting in Ukarumpa

Miniafia Finishes Race

How It Began

MINIAFIA, the name of the language of 3,500 speakers, is located in the Tufi district of Popondetta in Oro Province. Thirty-six years ago a team from SIL went to visit the area and then in December 1973 David and Fran Wakefield went to live in Otukwaf village, one of the 20 Miniafia villages.

Two men started to help David but they quit after realizing he was not there for business. Then Richard from Ajoa village worked with him. Richard recruited his nephew Josiah Javeve and Josiah in turn recruited Stanley Oyabua. Richard passed on the work to Josiah and Stanley.

David wrote the Miniafia grammar and did some anthropology study. He also did a panorama of Genesis and translated Mark. The Wakefields then left for the United States leaving the two men to continue the work.

Help From the Family of God

Josiah and Stanley faced the most difficult times without an adviser. Although the Wakefields remained in-touch with them what they needed most was

someone overseeing their work. Stanley says, "...the work was hard and slow without an adviser, community support was very little, and the church did not recognize the work of translation yet... there were no review checkers ... We were left alone..." They also came into crisis when death did not spare their children. "In January 2001 my 19-year old daughter passed away. I was in great pain. I gave up translation work for a year. I complained to the Lord, 'Lord, why did you let my daughter leave me?' I must confess that I was angry with the Lord, and I decided to give up. I sat there with tears thinking about my beloved daughter..." Josiah laments. There was no other way but to turn to God and to each other during these critical times.

In their difficulty God sent help from several places. Josiah and Stanley joined BTA. They attended the Translators Training Courses in Ukarumpa, which helped them immensely in finishing the Miniafia New Testament without an adviser. In 1984 David and Carole Spaeth went to live in Ajoa as literacy workers. They left after ten years but they continued to support the translation

BTA Convenes ... continued from page 1

Serah Makton, General Secretary for Bible Translation and Literacy Project, Vanuatu.

This was the first conference to attract Melanesian partners and Pastors and leaders in the Aiyura Valley.

The members had a time of orientation and spiritual retreat, elected new board of trustees, report and update progress of work and adopt strategic plans for the next two years.

The urgency to bring the Word of God to Papua New Guineans in their heart language is of paramount importance to PNG Bible Translation. Since its inception in 1980, BTA has been involved in the completion of 15 New Testaments. Currently BTA supervises and coordinates over 35 language programs doing translation, literacy and scripture use work. BTA has 15 full time staff and 89 field workers working in over 13 provinces in the country.

Aiyura Valley Pastors Support Bible Work

Several local Pastors in Aiyura Valley have participated in the National Conference for the first time.

David Gudiri, SIL Assistant Director for Local Church Relations, said the support of the churches began after he participated in combined pastors prayer gathering. The opportunities for prayer led him to encourage the church to be involved in Bible translation. Many of the churches in the valley are part of the Aiyura Valley Pastors Fraternal and have been showing interest in Bible translation programs since 2005. About eighteen churches were involved.

During a pastors retreat in November

2008 at Yonki, Eastern Highlands Province, they were encouraged to get involved in Bible translation.

Thus, during the BTA National Conference, pastors and leaders from the Tok Pisin Congregation, Christian Outreach Church and Lutheran Church were given the fellowship sessions in the night. They pledged their support and encouraged church members to get involved in supporting translation work. The sessions were a time of being refreshed in the Word. During one of the meetings, translators were able to reconcile and forgive one another for wrongs from the past.

Gulf Province Wants Bible in Heart Languages

The Gulf Province is referred to as “the least developed province in the whole of Papua New Guinea” and the people are stigmatized. Others call Kerema, the capital, a “ghosts’ town.” As in many parts of PNG, the people live in fear of witchcraft, sorcery, and rascals. Badi Vila who belongs to the Tairuma people group says, “When I was younger, I felt so intimidated [as someone] from the Gulf Province because of all the above reasons.”

Badi is the BTA Scripture In Use Point Person. In 2004 she was part of a team that did language survey in Kerema. There are 22 language groups in the Gulf Province. Thinking that the team came to translate the Bible the people asked them when they were going to start translating. Badi remembers particularly four old people who spoke to her about translating the Bible into the Tairuma language. She explained to them that they were not Bible translators but there are translators trained for

the job. However, there is a procedure in getting translation work started.

Badi took a four-month leave early this year from her post in BTA Admin in order to follow up on that request made many years ago. She went to Kerema and stayed there talking and listening to the people. Those four old people are dead now. With a team of young people she ventured on a translation awareness trip to seven

villages within the reach of Kerema District and township. The village people responded like the four old people did five years ago.

Quickly the people formed a Kerema Translation working committee to prepare for a Translation Awareness Workshop (TAW) scheduled in March. Simon Savaiko, the BTA Language Program Coordinator for the South-West Gulf Region, went to help Badi conduct the workshop. It was hosted in the Kerema Town United Church with more than 30 participants from ten language groups, and seven different denominations. All those who attended showed high



Tairuma girls reading the English Bible on the roadside.

Audio Bible for BTA New Testaments

Fourteen BTA translation programs are considering the Mega Voice (audio Bible) approach. The Mega Voice Project will assist Papua New Guineans to hear the Word of God in their heart language.

Tom Treseder, co-founder of the Mega Voice told BTA translators during the National Conference, that all over the world, people are hearing the Good News of Jesus Christ from the solar powered handheld audio player.

The light weight, water, sand and vermin proof audio player called an ambassador cannot be erased and can hold up to four versions of audio Bible messages.

From Burkina Faso in Africa to Vanuatu in the Pacific, oral communities are enjoying listening to the Bible. In Tanni Island in Vanuatu, a simultaneous re-

lease of 300 print and audio Bibles converted a witch doctor after hearing the audio Bible. A further 400 ambassadors were requested.

There is already a demand for the audio Bibles in Papua New Guinea.

An ambassador costs \$US40 and BTA hopes to buy many ambassadors for tribal people and distribute where its project are. For more information you can visit www.megavoice.com



Tom Treseder shows Martha Wame a sample of the Mega Voice player

PNG Bible Translation on World Wide Web

The PNG Bible Translation Association launched their new website on Friday 12th June. The site was developed with the help of the Monsoon team from the Asia-Pacific Wycliffe Area Communications office. The link is <https://bta.kkoncepts.net/user> < file:localhost/user> or www.pngbta.org/com.

Abraham Meal

A Translators' Training Course Experience

The Translators' Training Course (TTC) is a joint training program conducted by SIL, BTA, and Pioneer Bible Translators (PBT).

During the recent TTC held in Ukarumpa on April 29-June 3, 2009 the participants had a unique experience by re-enacting Hebrew hospitality called "Abraham Meal".

William Butler from PBT as Abraham calls out to travelers (students) passing through to come into his tent to share a meal. His wife as Sarah makes sure there's enough food to serve to the guests. The TTC staff are the servants.

Abraham sits inside the tent waiting for the servants to wash the feet of the visitors. They enter and sit on the floor on mats and pillows facing Abraham. He gives orders to the servants to prepare a meal for the wayfarers.

The meal consist of unleavened bread, dried fruits such as dates and figs, fresh grapes, almonds, pickled olives, lentil,

leavened bread, and most importantly, roasted lamb. He takes each dish from the servants and pass it to his guests. As he serves he explains each item.

Everyone is free to ask questions any-time during the meal. This is an innovative way of learning Old Testament culture.



Servants washing the feet of the guests

TTC participants really appreciate this activity. It does not happen in every TTC, however, as it needs a lot of preparation and ingenuity in procuring the needed materials without mentioning the cost. Thanks to William Butler who takes it upon himself to provide this learning opportunity to the translators in training.

motivation to start their own translation projects.

Now the translation working committee is in the process of forming a provincial translation committee which will work towards forming small sub-translation committees in the different districts. The plan is that these district committees will do the awareness in their language clusters then report the needs back to the provincial committee who would then work closely with BTA by recommending the needs for translation, literacy and scripture in use.

After this fulfilling trip Badi enthuses, "... we sense that a new day is dawning for us - the least developed province, the ghosts' town, and the rascals will be transformed by the written Word of God - No more will people live in fear of

witchcraft, sorcery, etc. This is the Gulf Province I and my people envision when the Bible is translated in our own heart languages."

"...we sense that a new day is dawning for us - the least developed province, the ghosts' town, and the rascals will be transformed by the written Word of God ..."

This old man is 77, will he be able to hear a Bible verse in Tairuma in his life time?



PRAYER CALL for East Papua Region

- Pray for Suau and Tawala language committee that the team will work together. The sparsely populated villages on the island and mainland of Milne Bay Province makes it difficult for communication with the communities about Bible Translation progress. Tawala language has 20,000 speakers while Suau has 9000.
- Pray for restoration and rehabilitation for Omie and Aisi speakers in the Kokoda District of Oro Province. After the devastation of Cyclone Guba in 2007, self support projects were destroyed. They need financial support.

In Focus: The Opungus

Victor Opungu is from the Mekeo people group in Central Province. He helped translate the Mekeo New Testament which was dedicated in 1999. It was while translating God's Word that Victor became a follower of Jesus. With the help of SIL and BTA he went through further training within the country and overseas and became a trainer for other national translators. He and other men from the village took the initiative to start translating the Old Testament.

Ana comes from the Balangao tribe in Northern Philippines. She is a second generation fruit of the Bible translation work in Balangao. She first went to a creative access country with Youth With A Mission before she joined Wycliffe. It was while taking her linguistics training in Darwin, Australia in 2000 that she and Victor met. More than five years later they decided to become lifetime partners and serve together in the ministry of Bible translation. They got married in September 29, 2006.

After their wedding in the Philippines they planned to come to Papua New Guinea to work together under BTA. However, the difficulty of obtaining a

visa for Ana forced them to stay in the Philippines for over two years allowing them only short visits to PNG. Ana finally got her visa advice late last year but she was in the advance stage of pregnancy so they waited for the delivery of their daughter. In March this year they finally arrived here in PNG.



Victor and Ana Opungu with their daughter Zeiti Elviane

Victor and Ana will continue to be involved in the Old Testament translation and in promoting the use of the translated Word in Mekeo through literacy and Scripture use. They are waiting to have a house built for them before they move to the village.

As a trainer Victor will be teaching translation courses. He is also an advanced trainee for consultant checking needing to complete a few requirements before he becomes a full consultant.

GOING O.T.

GETTING TO KNOW OUR OLD TESTAMENT PROGRAMS

Rigo Cluster: The Ripple Effect

The Rigo cluster translation work started with the Sinaugoro language whose New Testament was dedicated in 1995. This has raised interest among dialects of Sinaugoro namely Kalo, Boku and Taboro. Although they are related to Sinaugoro there are enough differences requiring separate translations. With the help of technology particularly the ADAPT-IT program Kalo used the Sinaugoro New Testament to derive its own translation which took four years to complete. Boku and Taboro translated only portions of the New Testament.

These programs were started by Dr Gerhard and Hiltrud Tauberschmidt under SIL. When they left in 2004 the work was turned over to Kidu Magi and under BTA. These language groups have teams of their own. Sinaugoro is now doing the Old Testament full scale. From the Sinaugoro translation Kalo will do its Old Testament and Boku and Taboro with the New Testament using the adaptation program. The Seed Company is funding these programs.

Guhu Samane: Three Generations of Bible translators

Guhu Samane started back in 1958. Ttopoqogo Hopusu and his son Mumure Ttopoqogo joined the translation work in 1965. The New Testament was dedicated in 1975. SIL translator Ernie Richert left after the dedication and Ttopoqogo Hopusu died two years later. Mumure went on to revise the New Testament adding Psalms completing it in 1982. He was burdened to also translate the Old Testament and in the process he joined BTA. A cyclone in 1997 destroyed his work with the whole office. Soon his son Steven joined him starting all over again.

Recently many people got interested to help and now there are nine people in the team. So far nine books were consultant-checked, two were printed, and 18 were drafted.

Steven has joined BTA Admin as the Translators Training Course principal in Ukarumpa. His father continues to lead the work in the village.